

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MADRID 003201

SIPDIS

FOR EUR/FO; EUR/WE; WHA; NEA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/15/2015

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [SP](#) [XF](#) [XM](#) [XL](#) [XG](#)

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S MEETING WITH DEPUTY FM LEON:
KATRINA ASSISTANCE, BMENA AND LATIN AMERICA

Classified By: POLCOUNS Kathleen Fitzpatrick for reasons
1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) Summary: Ambassador Aguirre met with Spanish Deputy Foreign Minister Bernardino Leon Sept. 7 to review key issues in the US-Spain agenda in the coming months, including BMENA and Latin American issues. He thanked the GOS for its sincere and concrete support for the victims of Hurricane Katrina, noting that he planned to go to Torrejon airport later that day for the departure of two Spanish Hercules aircraft bearing assistance to the US. He also thanked Spain for assisting in the aftermath of the bridge collapse in Iraq by sending a Hercules aircraft to remove victims. The Ambassador noted that though NEA PDAS Cheney had to postpone her visit to Spain, she and the Secretary remained keenly interested in Spanish participation in and contribution to BMENA, including the Foundation for the Future. Leon said he would make sure the Minister was aware. On Latin America, Leon agreed with the Ambassador on the utility of holding a high level "working group" style meeting between the US and Spain on Latin America issues, including Cuba and Venezuela. Leon put forward the possibility of a meeting on the margins of UNGA in either NY or Washington rather than in late September in Madrid, noting that all of the key Spanish players would be in the US next week. The meeting also touched on Turkey-EU and Western Sahara. End Summary

12. (SBU) The Ambassador stressed to Leon USG's desire for Spanish contribution to the BMENA Foundation for the Future, noting Secretary Rice's personal interest and our desire to make the Bahrain conference a success with European involvement. Leon said he would convey this to Moratinos but acknowledged that he, Leon, did not have full details on where Spain stood on the subject. He stressed Spain's interest in ensuring the complementarity of the Barcelona Process, the Spanish President Zapatero's Alliance of Civilizations proposal and BMENA, underscoring his government's strong desire to for the Secretary's participation in the 10th anniversary meeting of the Barcelona process in November.

13. (C) While pointing to progress in the Barcelona process, Leon lamented the impact of these and related efforts remained at the "micro" rather than the "macro" level. The impact needs to be made as profound as is widespread, Leon noted. He said the Alliance of Civilizations project, now adopted by the UN, remained a key focus of the Spanish government as it sought to bridge gaps between the Arab/Islamic worlds and the "West" and to dispel perceptions that Islamic extremist terrorism was an attack by the entire Islamic world rather than an extremist component. Leon thought that a division of labor within several concentric circles (BMENA, Barcelona Process and Alliance of Civilizations) would be useful. He noted that Moratinos, now in the Middle East (and meeting with the Palestinian Authority as well as Israeli government officials) was focusing on the security sector and that Spain had contributed some 20 million Euros in this and related efforts. In underscoring Spain's strong national interest in the Middle East, Leon likened the current situation to the Cold War, when states on the border with the Warsaw pact had to develop and "Ostpolitik." Spain, with its proximity to North Africa, now stands on the border of today's challenge of Islamic extremist terrorism, and for this reason was taking a leading role in efforts, like the Alliance of Civilizations, to deal with the Arab/Islamic world.

14. (C) On Latin America, Ambassador Aguirre expressed his desire for a high-level working group session with appropriate GOS counterparts on Latin America, where the US and Spain share interests but where we also have differences. Leon agreed that such a meeting would be useful, particularly to review our policies on Venezuela and Cuba and our cooperative efforts and concerns in Bolivia, and other states. Leon said Chavez is particularly worrisome to Spain, given his capacity for mischief in a variety of areas, including the oil sector and regional security. Spain sought to create a group of moderate concerned governments to influence Chavez, balancing outreach efforts with clear statements of expectations on Chavez' behavior.

15. (C) Ambassador Aguirre told Leon that he saw the upcoming Ibero-American summit in Salamanca, Spain, as a

possible accident waiting to happen. Leon acknowledged that the presence of Castro and Chavez would need to be managed, and said the government was working on how it would deal with public events with these two leaders. He pointed to Spanish President Zapatero's strong statements on Cuba at last year's summit in Costa Rica. Leon said Salamanca would be a "closed city" during this time, intimating that this could serve to limit opportunities for grandstanding by Castro and Chavez.

16. (SBU) Leon and the Ambassador undertook to find an appropriate time frame for a working level meeting. The Ambassador said he was exploring scheduling options for the US side in late September. Leon said that time frame would be difficult for the Spanish, given the demands of planning the Ibero-American summit in mid-October. Leon suggested that the working-group meeting take place on the margins of UNGA, either in New York or Washington, when all of the key Spanish players would be in the US. The Ambassador undertook to look into this possibility as well.

17. (C) At the close of the meeting, the Ambassador raised Turkey-EU negotiations. Leon said that the GOS was concerned that the recent Turkish declaration on Cyprus non-recognition had complicated the process. Leon told the Ambassador that Moratinos might travel to Ankara and Nicosia to try to help ameliorate the situation. Leon noted that Spain had excellent relations with both Turkey (a member co-sponsor of the Alliance of Civilizations group initiative) and with Cyprus. Thus, Spain felt it could play a positive role.

18. (C) Leon also noted Spain's concern about resolving the Western Sahara issue. He said at the moment the issue was not a front page problem, not connected with terrorism, and benefited from a fairly reasonable Saharwi leadership. In the medium term, as Saharwis remained in tent cities, these three positive factors could disintegrate and the Western Sahara could quickly become a front burner issue. With its good relations with Morocco and Algeria, as well as significant Spanish parliamentary interest in the human rights aspects, Spain sought to play a role in resolving the situation and hoped the USG would also. Leon suggested the US and Spain could work together similar to US-French cooperation on Lebanon, and in this way develop a solution that would be palatable to Morocco and Algiers.

AGUIRRE